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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DAKAR 000636

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PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHER

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TAGS: PGOV PREL SOCI ECON PINR KDEM SG

SUBJECT: SENEGAL-THE OPPOSITION WON, BUT NOW WHAT?

Classified By: CLASSIFIED BY DCM J.T SMITH FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶11. (C) Summary: In a wide ranging discussion with newly elected Dakar Regional Councilor, Rahmet Sow, she admitted that the opposition coalition grouped under the Benno Siggil Senegaal (BSS) banner did far better than any of them had expected and refuted rumors that the BSS was on the verge of breaking up. Sow also revealed that in her capacity as of one of the advisers to the new Mayor of Dakar, Khalifa Sall, she was part of the group reviewing the files of the previous mayor, Pape Diop, and that they had already discovered many financial black holes and "explosive documents." End Summary.

¶12. (C) Following their unexpected victories in the March 22 local election, the BSS which is made up of some 20 disparate but mostly left-leaning parties, was faced with the task of dividing the spoils. By dint of having placed more people on the electoral lists, the Socialist Party (PS) and the Alliance for Progress (AFP) have been facing major criticisms from within the BSS that they are hogging all the good jobs, "That's true," said Sow "but, these two parties were the only ones who gambled everything and placed their top candidates on the majority list" (Note: under the Senegalese electoral system parties compete with two lists: a "winner takes all" and a proportional one. End Note.) while all the others, not expecting to do so well, placed their candidates on the safer proportional list. So when there was a clean sweep both the PS and AFP ended up with a bulk of the candidates. It is thus natural they will ask for the most number of positions." She then went on to refute allegations that the BSS was about to implode because of this problem, "Actually the BSS is a good thing for all of us. It means that we all have to cooperate and work with one another and this bodes well for the Presidential elections in 2012. One thing this election has proven is that united we fare much better than divided."

New Faces

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¶13. (C) One result of this election is that a lot of new faces have entered the Senegalese political scene, especially in the opposition camp. Since many of the older generation of opposition politicians were convinced that they would not win, they did not compete, leaving the way open for a new generation of younger, and in general, unknown leaders, "This new crop of leaders is a double-edged sword for us," said Sow, "Yes, they are new and fresh and this is very exciting, but many of them are inexperienced in managing cities, especially on the financial side. We have to be very careful not to fall into the trap of bad financial management because, in the end, we will be judged on their performance and this will have a direct effect on how we fare in 2012. We plan on setting up a committee (called Plateforme Des Elus-Platform of the Elected) whose task will be to assist all our new mayors in how to manage their cities."

## A Generational Shift

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¶4. (C) Continuing with her theme about the opposition's new leaders, Sow added, "This election saw a generational shift. Lots of these new, young people, won by themselves. Take Khalifa, he self-financed his whole campaign, so he owes nothing to no-one. He also supported a host of other candidates in Dakar who are now Mayors. Another development has been the increase in the number of women in key positions. Prior to the election, we made a deal that women would be placed in one of the top five positions in all the regional and municipal councils that the BSS won. So far, I am pleased to say that has been the case."

## New Poles of Power

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¶5. (C) Sow remarked that with the rise of a younger generation of leaders, the opposition will probably be divided into three major poles of power, "I think that (former Prime minister) Macky Sall will constitute one pole. His is an interesting case for us. Clearly he took away a lot of votes from the SOPI coalition and in some areas we could not have won without him, yet there are questions as to his endgame. I think that he still has one foot in the (ruling) Democratic Party of Senegal (PDS) while the other with us. He has his own schemes regarding the government, the PDS, and us. Another pole will be PS pole. It is difficult to say who will lead that. Tanor (Ousmane Tanor Dieng is the leader of the Socialist Party) is still the big

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gun. He has all the money, but someone like Khalifa, who owes very little to him, may challenge him in the future. The third pole will be one lead by AFP leader (former prime minister) Mustafa Niasse. He should retire, but we all know he won't."

## Financial Black Holes

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¶6. (C) Since April 20, the new team at the Mayor's office of Dakar has been going through the books of the previous administration. Sow said that they had already identified a number of "explosive files" where money has been spent without any accounting of where it has gone. She described the case of the Credit Municipal. This is a micro-finance bank that was set up by Pape Diop in order to give credit to poor people, without collateral, to help them set up businesses. Sow said that when they called the person in charge to brief them about the status of the bank, he came to the meeting with a sheet of paper that was nearly blank. Sow added that all the records of the Credit Municipal have disappeared and that the man was incapable of giving them any figures as to the amounts of money that were disbursed. She also confided that the Municipality had paid for projects that were supposed to have been funded by the Karim Wade-led National Agency for the Islamic Conference (ANOCI). However, so far they have been unable to find any documents that outline the agreement between the two bodies, "Without an agreement, the municipality should have never paid for ANOCI projects. Clearly the City of Dakar was stuck with the bill.

We have no choice but to audit the books, otherwise we will be accused of having misspent the city's money. That's one reason why Wade will play nice with us. We have the books and he knows the kind of damage that we can cause him." In an answer to a question about prosecutions if they discover incontrovertible evidence of malfeasance by PDS mayors, Sow demurred, saying that they would cross that bridge when they got there.

Comment

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¶7. (C) Now that they have won, the opposition needs to deliver on the basic wishes of the people. However, minuscule budgets and massive problems await the new opposition Mayors. Meanwhile, a feisty President who still has total control over a large chunk of the finances of local governments can, if he wishes, make life extremely difficult for the opposition. For example, the President has already put forward a proposal to take away the power of municipalities to sign construction contracts. This will hurt the new opposition mayor of Dakar in particular. Moreover, the President's designation of his son, Karim, as the new Minister of State for Infrastructure, Territorial Management, International Cooperation, and Air Transport suggests that he is not prepared to relinquish control over infrastructure and construction projects, which are, of course, rich sources of patronage and graft.

End Comment.

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